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A BRIEF ACCOUNT  
OF  
**THE SIKHS**

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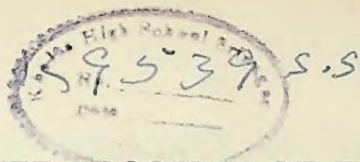
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## A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SIKHS

The word *Sikh* is the Punjabi form of Sanskrit *Shishya*, which means a learner or a disciple. The Sikhs as a community are the disciples and followers of the *Gurus*, Nanak to Gobind Singh, who created out of the disunited and emasculated fabric of society in Northern India a well-knit homogeneous body of people devoted in a bold and selfless spirit to the service of their countrymen. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born at Talwandi Rai Bhoi (now called Nankana Sahib), to the south-west of Lahore (Pakistan) in April 1469. He was a revolutionary, religious and social reformer according to whom the political and cultural domination of the people by the ruling and priestly classes was chiefly responsible for their degeneration. Their emancipation, he thought could only be brought about by a new consciousness which should instil into them the unity and fatherhood of God and the equality and fraternity of man. He refused to recognize the distinctions between man and man and between the sexes created by the old caste systems and other orthodox social conventions and proclaimed that all women born were equal in the eyes of God.

He felt that the real cause of the misery of the people was their disunity born of diversity of belief. He sought, therefore, to bring them together both in thought and deed. He inculcated a common mode of

worship and a common social organization based on equality of man. He laid the foundation of *Sangat*, or mixed congregations, where his disciples met in the evenings as brothers-in-faith, sang the hymns of the Guru and derived inspiration for remoulding their lives. He also established a free community-kitchen *Guru ka langer*, where all sat and ate together in the same row (*Pangat*), regardless of distinctions of caste, creed or status in life. The Hindus and the Muslims, the Brahmins and the Sudras were thus brought by Guru Nanak to a common social level.

Unlike many other saints and reformers of India Guru Nanak did not confine himself exclusively to a life of prayer and devotion. He refused to sit idle in slumbering meditation while his people groaned under the heel of the oppressor. He awakened them to a new consciousness and upbraided the rules of his day, saying: "kings are butchers. cruelty their knife *Dharma* or the sense of duty and responsibility, has taken wings and vanished." According to him 'it was only fools and idiots who ruled' with little regard to the good of the people. 'The kings,' according to Guru Nanak should be the dispensers of equality and justice.

This was a message of hope to the people to shake off their cowardice and dependance and to have faith in God 'who could in an instant, demolish the old kingly edifices and raise the lowest of the lowly to the highest pedestal.' His institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* brought before the people the vision of a

classless democratic society where all could claim equal status. This made Guru Nanak a symbol of manly independence and self-reliance, which, as history shows, helped create a people whose like in indomitable courage and dogged tenacity in war and peace has yet to be seen.

Guru Nanak was a great traveller. For forty years he travelled throughout the length and breadth of India to preach his message, and went to Mecca and Baghdad in the West and to Burma and China in the East. Wherever he went he proclaimed that there was but one God, not of the Hindus or of the Mussalmans but of all mankind. Under whatever name He is worshipped or remembered — Rama, Allah, etc.,—He is *the one*, formless, invisible, uncreated creator, fearless and friendly, great and bountiful. The worship of God is not the exclusive privilege of a priestly class. He is best worshipped in selfless service of humanity wherein every man and woman should participate to deserve His blessings. He protested against idolatry, blind superstition and empty ritual which had sapped religious faith and morality and parted the hearts of men from their Creator.

'In the doctrines of Nanak' says C. H. Payne, "morality holds a higher place than in those of any other Hindu reformer. Few, even of the world's great philosophers, have laid down a more exalted moral code than is to be found in the pages of the *Granth Sahib* (the Sikh scripture). Purity of life is set forth as the



highest object of human endeavour...Loyalty, chastity, honesty, justice, mercy and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid".

Guru Nanak did not advocate renunciation or asceticism. Towards the end of his life he settled down with his family and sons at Kartarpur (Pakistan) opposite to Dera Baba Nanak in the Gurdaspur district. He was a prophet of the people whose service, to him, was the greatest happiness of life. He lived amongst them, shared their sorrows and pleasures and taught them the way of honest and truthful living. "Truth is, higher, but higher still is truthful living." said he.

He wished his disciples to be servant of God and His people. "Having created the human body, God has installed His veryself therein," said he. And, "this world is the Chamber of God wherein the True One resides"—*Ih jagg sachche ki hai kothri, sachche ka vich vas*. Therefore, with his human body, "Let us be of service in this world so that we may find a seat in the court of the Lord," *Vich dunniya sev kamayie, tan dargeh baisan paiye*.

He was held in affection not only among his Sikh disciples but also among his Hindu and Muhammadan countrymen who honoured him as a holy Saint and called him *Baba Nanak* or *Nanak Shah*. On his death in 1539 at Kartarpur he was claimed by both as their own, and they both in their

own fashions raised mausoleums in his memory with a common wall between them—a thing unique in the history of religions.

Guru Nanak's torch was taken up by his nine devoted successors in the following order--

- |                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. Guru Nanak         | 1469- 1539 |
| 2. Guru Angad         | 1539-1552  |
| 3. Guru Amar Dass     | 1552 -1574 |
| 4. Guru Ramdas        | 1574-1581  |
| 5. Guru Arjun         | 1581-1606  |
| 6. Guru Hargobind     | 1606-1645  |
| 7. Guru Har Rai       | 1645-1661  |
| 8. Guru Har Krishan   | 1661-1664  |
| 9. Guru Teg Bahadur   | 1664-1 675 |
| 10. Guru Gobind Singh | 1675-1708  |

Guru Angad was a zealous preacher who strengthened the unifying institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* set up by the first Guru and popularized the Punjabi script the *Gurumukhi*, by recording there in the biography and hymns of the Master. Guru Amar Das was a great social reformer. He stood for the emancipation of women and opposed the practice of *Pardah* the veiling of women, and led a vigorous campaign against *sati*, the burning alive of widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, Guru Ramdas; the fourth Guru, gave to the sikhs rallying centre at Amritsar where in 1574; he laid the foundation of the present city and excavated the famous tank three years later,



Guru Ramdās died in 1581 and his son and successor Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru added to the fame and glory of the town. He had the tank built in lime masonry, and constructed a temple in the centre of it. This temple, the *Darbar Sahib*, now known as the Golden Temple, is a symbol of the culture and conduct of the Sikh people. It enshrines a liberal religious tradition consecrated by noble deeds of piety, sacrifice and heroism. Unlike the old Indian temples with a single entrance, it has four doors opening out in four different directions offering welcome to all without any discrimination of class or creed. Dedicated to no particular deity, with no idol or image installed in it, it has no sectarian bias.

on the banks of this sacred tank and in the precincts of the holy temple Guru Arjan composed and sang his hymns and preached his message. He was a saint and scholar of rare piety and literary attainments, His compositions bespeak the great depth of his mind and sublimity of his thoughts, full of divine love and human sympathy. It was reserved for him to compile and install in the Sikh sanctuary the holy book of the Sikhs which is the only object of religious reverence and worship for them. The *Guru Granth Sahib*, as this great book is called, which includes not only the hymns of the Sikh Gurus but also of a number of Hindu, Muslim and the so called untouchable saints and sages of India, may rightly

be called the bible of the people. The most remarkable thing about it is that it is written in the spoken language of the people to whom the Masters delivered their message of devotion to God and service to humanity. In addition to its cosmopolitan character and outlook it is the only scripture which has come down through the generations in its original form without the change of a single letter or a vowel sign. Its first manuscript is preserved in *Gurdwara Sheesh Mehal* at Kartarpur in the Jullundur district. The central temple of Amritsar and the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* gave to Sikhism the shape of a regular Church.

The teachings of the Gurus the abolition of the dividing distinctions of caste and creed and the establishment of Sikh congregations throughout the country, with Amritsar as their Mecca and the *Granth Sahib* as their Bible, made the Sikhs a living community devoted to the moral and social regeneration of the people. The spirit of service and self-sacrifice engendered by the teachings of the Gurus crystallized at the time of Guru Arjan into distinct national traits.

The increasing popularity to Guru Arjun among Hindus and Muslims aroused suspicions in the mind of Emperor Jehangir, who wrote in his autobiography the *Tuzki jehangiri*, that "a Hindu, Arjun by name lived in the garb of a *Pir* and *Shaikh* and captivated the hearts of many simple minded Hindus, and foolish and stupid Muslims, by his ways and means...

They called him *Guru*, and from all directions fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. From three or four generations they had kept this shop warm. For years the thought had been presenting itself to me that I should either put an end to this false traffic or that he (Guru Arjun) should be brought into the fold of Islam. "Then refering to the allegation against the Guru having blessed his rebellious son Khusro, he said: "*I fully knew his heresies*, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, and having handed over his houses mansions and children to Murtaza Khan and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures." The orders were carried out and the Guru was tortured to death in 1606 A. D.

Guru Arjun thus suffered martyrdom at the altar of his faith. His successor, Guru Hargobind, seeing that the tyranny of the mugal authority in India had become unbearable, relegated the rosary to the treasury and accorded sanction to the use of steel in the defence of *Dharma* and for the protection of the oppressed. He himself wore two swords on the occasion of his succession at *Akal Takht* at Amritsar as emblems of spiritual and temporal authority — *Piri* and *Miri* — the combination of *Deg* and *Tegh* — the kettle to supply food to the needy the sword to smite the oppressor. This was the first step towards the transformation of Sikhism into a militant church.



Mohsin Fani, a contemporary of Guru Hargobind, tells us in his *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* that 'the Guru had seven hundred horses in his stables; and three hundred cavaliers and sixty artillerymen were always in his service.' This was the first corps of Sikh volunteers raised by the Guru at Amritsar. It was near the site of the Khalsa College that the Sikhs fought in 1628 their first battle against the Mughal forces of Emperor Shahjahan.

But Guru Hargobind was not a mere soldier. He was primarily a saint, a *Guru* the sixth in direct spiritual inheritance from Guru Nanak. He had taken to martial ways with a view to creating among his people a will to resistance and preparing them to stand up to the tyranny and oppression of the ruling race: Guru Hargobind's reply to a question by the Maratha saint, *Shri Samarth Ramdas* is very significant. During his rambles in Northern India, *Samarth Ramdas* met Guru Hargobind at Srinager in about 1634. Fully armed and riding a horse, the Guru had just returned from a hunting excursion. 'I had heard that you occupied the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak,' said Ramdas. Guru Nanak was a *tyagi sadhu*—a saint who had renounced the world. You are wearing arms and keeping an army and horses. You allow yourself to be addressed as *Sacha Padshah*, the True King. What sort of a *Sadhu* are you?' asked the Maratha saint. Guru Hargobind replied: 'Internally a hermit and externally a prince. Arms mean protection to the poor and destruction to

the tyrant. Baba Nanak had not renounced the world but had renounced *maya* i. e. self and ego—'

गुरु हरि गोबिंद कहिया वातन फकीरी जाहर अमीरी  
शस्त्र गरीब की रखिआ जरवाने की भखिआ । बाबा  
नानक संसार नहीं त्यागिआ था, माया त्यागी थी ।

These words of Guru Hargobind found a ready response in the heart of Ramdas, who, as quoted in *Pothi Panjah Sakhian* spontaneously said, 'this appealeth to my mind— *yeh hamre man bhavti hai*'. He found in the words of the Guru an expression of his own inner spirit and latent ideas. He seems to have realized that the Marathas, who had much in common with the people of the Punjab in their physical and spiritual make-up, could well imbibe the spirit of the Guru and collaborate with the Sikhs in resisting and vanquishing the intolerant Mughals.

The vision of Guru Hargobind and Samarth Ramdas was fulfilled in the eighteenth century,

Guru Hargobind was a great missionary as well, and it was a result of his own work and that of the orders of Udasir and Masands, and other organizations encouraged and strengthened by him, that the faith of Sikhism spread beyond the boundaries of India. To this Mohsin Fani bears witness saying that there were not many cities in the inhabited countries where some Sikhs were not to be found.

Guru Hargobind was succeeded by Guru Har Rai whose assistance to the fugitive philosopher-prince Dara Shikoh exited the royal [wrath Aurangzeb wreaked his vengeance upon Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, who had espoused the cause of the Kashmiri Hindus. Accusing him of proselytising activities and of association with sufi saints, such as Hafiz Adam and others, for whom he harboured in his mind the deepest hatred, the Emperor ordered the Guru to be put to death and his body to be cut in four pieces and hung at the four gates of the fort of Delhi.

Guru Gobind Singh the tenth and last of the Gurus, has been rightly called the soldier-saint of India. In his youth he applied himself closely to self-education and was deeply impressed by the idea that God had been sending saviours from time to time to uphold righteousness and to destroy evil. He felt that he himself had this mission to perform in his own country which suffered under the yoke of religious and political tyranny. The teachings of his predecessors and the unique examples of martyrdom had elevated the spirits of the Sikhs. But the old social shackles of the Hindu community, such as caste system, had not yet been completely broken. This hindered the growth of homogeneous well-knit class of people inspired by a common national ideal. In fact, the idea of nationalism had not yet been born in this



country. The ancient idea of the division of labour had created among the people well marked groups and classes which, with the passage of time, had developed into rigid castes with deep-rooted prejudices. The Sikh institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* had gone a long way towards demolishing caste. But the difference in the social level of the lowcaste Sudras and the high born Brahmins and Kshatriyas was so great that they could not join together in any common cause. These differences and prejudices could only be abolished by a bold reformer, ready to fight at once the religious fraternities and the political rulers of the land.

The first thing to do was to change the psychology of the people. This the Guru achieved by introducing a new form of baptism, and enjoining upon the baptised Sikhs, to be called the *Khalsa*, the master's Own, to wear, in future, the same five signs, all beginning with the letter K. Kesh (uncut hair), *Kangha* (a comb), *Kachha* (a pair of shorts), *Kara* (an iron bracelet) and *Kirpan* (a sword). Bravery, as much as truth and purity, was to be their religion. The *Khalsa* were inspired by a sense of divine mission, and no fear of any earthly power was to deflect them from their duty. A tremendous change was thus brought about in the character of the people. The lowest of the low in society, the sweepers, the barbers and the confectioners were transformed, as if by miracle, into doughty warriors who, along with the baptised Jats and Khatri, fought under the Guru's command as

many as fourteen battles, in twelve of which They were distinctly successful against the imperialist forces.

In addition to being a great soldier, Guru Gobind Singh was a versatile scholar, possessing an eloquent and forceful style of writing. With a sword dangling by his side and a bow and arrows ready, at hand, he would write his verses in the field of battle while directing the movements of his men in action against the enemy. There is hardly any literary subject that he has not treated with grace and facility in all the three languages then current in Northern India—Persian, Punjabi and Brijā. He has written in praise of God, enunciating his own beliefs and doctrines as a monotheist. He has extensively translated and summarized the ancient religious literature of India and has given us an autobiography. His writings cover about 1300 large-size pages and are available under the title of Sri Dasam Granth or the Book of the tenth Guru.

The aim of Guru Gobind Singh in founding the Khalsa was to build up a nation of the Purified Ones who would be free from fear and selfishness. But the rulers of the time—the Hindu rajas of the Shivaliks and the Great Mughal of Delhi, saw in the activities of the Guru a threat to their own power. At their own initiative and also under orders from the Emperor Aurangzeb, the Hill rajas and the Governor of Sirhind launched a regular war against him. In spite of the

heavy odds, the Guru continued the struggle. After his twelfth battle he had to leave his ancestral home at Anandpur for Malwa territory, south of the Sutlej. Two of his sons were killed fighting in the battle of Chamkaur while the younger two, eight and six years old, betrayed by a servant, were butchered to death under the orders of the Governor of Sirhind in the Xmas week of 1704. But they have left a permanent imprint on the pages of history. True to the spirit of their grandfather and great great-grandfather and the teachings of their faith, they stood unshaken against the tyranny of the ruling fanatics. No threats of tortures and no fear of death could frighten them, nor could the promises of a comfortable future allure them to adjure their faith. Bricked up alive and suffocated to unconsciousness, they resolutely refused to embrace Islam and accepted the butcher's knife with which they were slowly done to death.

But how great and unvengeful was Guru Gobind Singh ! He had taken to the sword only as a last resort. He readily accepted the invitation of the dying Aurangzeb and set out for the Deccan to see him for peaceful negotiations to solve the problem of the struggling Punjab. And after the death of the Emperor he would not seek to destroy his enemy's sons in distress, but like a true saint soldier, he stood for justice and lent a helping hand to the rightful heir Prince Muazzam Bahadur Shah against his usurping brother. The new emperor



Bahadur Shah gratefully acknowledged the assistance of the Guru in the battle of Jajau and presented to him on July 23, 1707, at Agra, a rich address of honour. The negotiations could not, however, be resumed as Bahadur Shah was not yet free from his difficulties and had to march to the South to suppress the rebellion of his younger brother Kam Bakhsh. The Guru, therefore, accompanied him to the Deccan, and before the negotiations could come to a successful conclusion, he was fatally stabbed at Nanded by an agent of the Nawab of Sirhind. He died on October 7, 1708.

This line of religious succession ended with the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. The Master's word in the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* was henceforth to be the spiritual guide of the Sikh people who were to recognize in the joint personality of an assembly of five true baptized Singhs the spirit of the Guru. The community at large or through their elected representatives assembled in a congregation, deliberating in the mystic presence of the Guru, represented by the Holy book, was to be considered the *Guru-Panth*, the supreme religious and secular authority of the Sikhs in all matters and at all times. This democratic secularization of religion, as we shall presently see, greatly influenced the life and conduct of the Sikh people who, like their spiritual Masters, became the pioneers of freedom movements in Northern India, establishing in the eighteenth century, socialistic republics, in the form

of Sikh *misals* and *panchayats* in the Punjab.

Guru Gobind Singh had, before his death, reclaimed at Nanded an ascetic *Bairagi*. Madho Das, converting him to his faith with the name of Banda Singh and reluming him with Promethean fire to continue his struggle for freedom of the Punjab from under the oppressing yoke of the Mughals.

The Sikhs under his command soon embarked on a career of conquest and within a few months of his arrival in the Punjab dislodged the Mughal power from the Cis-Sutlej territories. Samana, Shahabad and Sadhaura were among the first important places to fall to Banda Singh who occupied the fort of Mukhlis-garh to the North-East to Sadhaura to make it his capital. He next moved in the direction of Sirhind whose governor, Wazir Khan, came out to meet him with a large force and an innumerable host of Muslim crusaders. The battle was fought on the plain of Chapper Chiri on May 12, 1710. The cold blooded murder of the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh associated with the town and its governor was still fresh in the memory of the Sikhs. They made so strong and sweeping an attack that the enemy could not stand against them. Wazir Khan was killed in the battle and the capital of Sirhind was occupied on the third day.

The victory of Sirhind placed at the disposal of the Sikhs the entire province from Karnal to Lhudiana

and broke the first sod in their ultimate conquest of the Panjab in the days to come. Sardar Baj Singh, a companion and counsellor of Banda Singh, was appointed the governor of the conquered territory; with Ali Singh of Salaudi as his deputy. Fateh Singh of Bhai ke family was given the charge of Samana, and Ram Singh, brother of Baj Singh, that of Thanesar, jointly with Baba Binod Singh.

Banda Singh fixed upon Mukhlisgarh as his headquarters, repaired its old fort and renamed it Lohgarh, or the Iron Castle. He assumed royal authority; not in his own name but in the name of the Guru, whose *Khalsa* and *Banda*, or chosen slave, he proclaimed himself to be. He struck coins in the name of Guru Nanak-Gobind Singh with the following inscription in persian on the obverse :

سکه زد بر سر دود عالم تیغ نانک راهب است  
فتح گویند سنگ شاه شالان فضل نیجا صاحب است

By the grace of the True Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds;

The sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons and victory is of (Guru) Gobind Singh, the king of kings.

The reverse had the following words in praise of



his newly founded capital;

ضرب به امان الدهر مصوّرت شهر زینت التخت مبارک عت

Struck in the City of Peace, illustrating the beauty of civic life, and the ornament of the blessed throne.

He also introduced an official seal for State documents and letters patent. It contained the following inscription expressive of his deep sense of devotion and loyalty to the Gurus;

عظمت نانک گورو ہم ظاہر و ہم باطن است  
پادشاہ دین و دنیا آپ سچا صاحب است

The greatness of Guru Nanak is visible, as well as invisible. The king of the spiritual as well as temporal world is the True Lord himself. This was later on changed to:

دیگ و تیغ و نصرت بید رنگ  
یافت از نانک گورد گوبند سنگھ

The Kettle and the Sword — the symbols of Service and Power—, Victory and ready Potronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak—Gobind Singh.

He started his own reignal year from the date of his conquest of Sirhind.

He had no time to organize any regular administration. But he knew the woes of the peasantry, groaning under the oppression of the landlords, and took immediate steps to abolish the Zimidari system. This was a revolutionary measure which exercised a great influence on the future fiscal history of the Panjab. A socialist in his thinking and a communist in the methods he employed, Banda Singh was over two centuries ahead of his times. As a result of the application of his methods the tillers of the soil soon became masters of their holdings and in the course of time, the curse of the Zamindari system which till very recently afflicted many parts of India, was lifted from the Panjab.

Banda Singh was a great political leveller and a thorough social uplifter. Wherever he went, he raised the down-trodden to position of authority and social prestige. 'In all the parganas occupied by the Sikhs', says William Irvine on the authority of contemporary writers, 'the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation had only to leave home and join the Guru (meaning Banda Singh), when in a short space of time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler, with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived

there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders .....Not a soul dared to disobey an order, and men, who had often risked themselves in battle-fields, became so cowed that they were afraid even to remonstrate.' The Sikhs were fired with a strong zeal to root out the Mughal tyranny from the land of the Ind, and such was the confidence inspired them in the minds of the non-muslim people that they came to be looked upon as defenders of their faith and their country. Every complaint from the oppressed people excited the Sikhs against the Mughal officials and aristocrats. Receiving complaints from across the Jamuna; Banda Singh led an expeditionary force to the east of that river and occupied Saharanpur. He was still busy in the Gangetic plain when the Sikhs of Jullundur Doab rose as one man to throw off the yoke of the Mughals. Being on the border of the province of Sirhind, they were the first to be electrified with the spirit of revolt and independence. They were successful in their enterprise. Sayyad Aslam Khan, the Governor of Lahore, was now seized with terror, He appealed to the religious sentiments of the Muslim population and raised the *Haidri* flag for a *Jehad* against the Sikhs. But so heavy was the defeat inflicted by the Sikhs upon the crusaders at Bheelowal that with the exception of the city of Lahore, practically the whole of Majha and Riarki fell into their hands. The Sikhs were now masters of the Panjab East of Lahore. According to Iradat Khan,' there was no

noble man daring enough to march against them from Delhi.' 'If Bahadur Shāh had not quitted the Deccan which he did in 1710, there is every reason to think says Malcolm,' that the whole of Hindustan would have been subdued by these —invaders.'

But the Mughal empire, with its inexhaustible resources in men and munitions of war, was too strong for the infant community of the Sikhs. Emperor Bahadur Shah moved with a mammoth army against them. They had to retire from Sirhind and Thanesar to the fort of Lohgarh. This hilly retreat of Banda Singh's forces was closely invested by over sixty thousand imperial horse and foot, including troops of the Rajput princes. The Sikhs soon ran short of provisions, and, by a determined sally on the night of November 30, 1710, they disappeared into the hills of Nahan. The Emperor had to move in dismay to Lahore to make it the base of his future operations against them. Frustrated in his efforts to get at the Sikh leader, Bahadur Shah issued edicts to his *Faujdar*s on December 10, to kill the disciples of Nanak (the Sikhs) wherever they were found—*Nanak prastan ra har ja kih ba-valand ba qatl rasanand*.

Within a fortnight of his escape, Banda Singh and his comrades were again active. In response to a *Hukamnama* issued by him on December 12, the Sikhs from all directions flocked to him at Kiratpur and



he was able to lead an expedition against some of the Hill rajas who had been troubling the last Guru. They were reduced to submission without much opposition. The Governor of Jammu was defeated on May 25, 1711. Kalanaur and Jatala also fell to the Sikhs. But the occupation of these places was only temporary. Banda Singh was constantly pursued by Imperial generals and he had again to retire to the hills.

The death of Bahadur Shah at Lahore on February 18, 1712, and the period of internecine struggle between his successors offered a favourable opportunity to the Sikhs to re-establish their power. Lohgarh once again became the capital of the Sikh kingdom. The armies of Emperor Farrukh Siyar again drove away Banda Singh to the hills from where he reappeared in the plains in the beginning of 1715. But he was not destined to be free for long. In the absence of a strong position for defence, he was brought to bay at the village of Gurdas-nangal. Here he was closely besieged in an enclosure 'But such was the terror of the Sikhs and their chief,' says Iradat Khan, 'that the commanders of the Imperial army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda Singh should seek his safety in flight from the siege.'

With Food and supplies run short, the situation soon became desperate. They had to slaughter animals and the flesh raw. When all grass was gone

they gathered leaves from trees. 'When these were consumed', says Irvine, 'they stripped the bark, and broke off the small shoots, dried them, ground them down and used them instead of flour, thus keeping body and soul together. They also collected the bones of animals and used them in same way. Some assert that they saw a few of the Sikhs cut flesh from their own thighs roast it and eat it.' 'In spite of all this,' says Kamwar Khan, 'the internal Sikh chief and his men withstood all the military force that the Great Mughal Empire could muster against them for eight long month's But how long could this last? The Sikhs were reduced to mere skeleton, and when no physical resistance was possible, they were made prisoners and taken to Delhi, Emperor Farrukh Siyar ordered them all, 794 in number, to be put to the sword at the rate of one hundred a day.

The carnage began on march 5, 1716, and 'it is not a little remarkable,' write Johan Surman and Edward Stephenson in their letter of march 10, 'with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one has apostatised from this new formed religion.

The details of Banda Singh's execution are too horrible to relate. The executioners hacked his son Ajai Singh to pieces in front of him, and, dragging out of his quivering heart, thrust it into the mouth of

the father, who stood unmoved, completely resigned to the will of God. Then came his own turn. First of all, he was deprived of his right eye and then of his left. Then his hands and feet were cut off, his flesh was torn with red-hot pincers and finally his head was chopped off., 'Banda Singh remained calm and serene up to the last, 'glorying,' says Elphinstone, 'In having been raised up by God to be the scourge to the inequities and oppressions of the age.' This took place on June 9, 1716.

Banda Singh has been accused by some ill-informed writers of anti-Muslim bias. Five weeks after his historic victory at Sirhind we find him telling Jan Muhammad of Buriya (Gulab Nagar) on June 23, 1710: 'I have forgiven your crime and appointed you Zamindar of the whole pargana. You should proceed with your men and bring in Sardar Khan of Chundla. Then you will accompany me for the chastisement of Jalal Khan.' There was no change in his policy even after the royal edict of December 10 ordering an indiscriminate massacre of the Sikhs wherever found. Although he was then himself pursued from place to place, he would not let his struggle assume the shape of a communal strife. His was a political struggle for the emancipation of his country from the tyranny of the Mughals, who happened to be Muslims by faith. He would not therefore impose any religious restrictions upon the Muslims as such. They, in fact, flocked to him in large numbers for protection and

service. The news-sheet presented to His Majesty, Emperor Bahadur Shah through Hidayatullah Khan on April 28, 1711, tells us :

The wretched disciple of Nanak (Banda Singh) has his camp in the town of Kalanaur up to the 19th (Rabi-ul awwal, 1123. April 16, 1711). During this period he has promised and proclaimed, 'I do not oppose the Muslims.' Accordingly, for any Muslim who approaches him, he fixes a daily allowance and wages, and looks after him. He has permitted them to read *Khutba* and *namaz*, with the result that five thousand Muslims have gathered round him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call and say their prayers in the army of the wretched (Sikhs).

This is also mentioned in a later news-sheets and is confirmed by one received by the Emperor on May 20, saying 'whoever from amongst the Hindus and Muslims comes to him for service is looked after and fed.'

Although the successes of Banda Singh were but temporary, there was a revolution effected in the minds of people of which history often fails to take notice. A will was created in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for the national cause. The example set by Banda Singh and his



companions in this respect was to serve as a beacon-light in the darker days to come. The idea of a national State, long dead, once again became a living aspiration, and, although suppressed for the time being by relentless persecution, it went on working underground like a smouldering fire and came out forty years later with a fuller effulgence, never to be suppressed again.

The history of the Sikhs from the fall of Banda Singh to the establishment of the Sikh power in the Panjab in 1764—65 is a record of the titanic struggle between the Khalsa on the one hand and the Mughals and the Durrani on the other. In it the sons of the soil not only fought for their very existence, but were also able, after long and determined suffering, to assert their superior right to rule over their own land.

After the defeat and death of Banda Singh every measure was taken not only to destroy the power of the Sikhs but to extirpate the community as a whole. The edict of Emperor Bahadur Shah ordering a general massacre of the Sikhs—men, women and children—was repeated by Farrukh Siyar, and a money reward was offered for the head of every sikh brought to Lahore, dead or alive. This continued for three years. Such were the results of the exertions of Addus-Samad Khan, the governor of Lahore, that for a time it appeared as if the boast of the Imperialists to

wipe out the name of Sikhs from the land was going to be fulfilled. The death of Emperor Farrukh Siyar in September 1719 gave them some respite. But on the transfer of Abdus Samad Khan to Multan in 1726, during the reign of Muhammad Shah, his youthful son and successor Zakariya Khan became the governor of Lahore determined 'to exterminate the whole nation of the Sikhs.' He sent out moving columns in all directions to hunt them out and to bring them to book. In hundreds and thousands 'they were daily brought in chains and executed in the streets of Lahore. They were tortured in different ways : broken on the wheel, flayed alive or cut up limb by limb.

What provoked the Sikhs to a relentless retaliation against the officials of Lahore was their attack on one Tara Singh of Van who was killed fighting in self-defence. He was very popular with them on account of his religious character and helpfulness in times of distress. The Sikhs rushed out of their hiding places and fell on government treasures and caravans. They made it impossible for revenue from villages to reach the government treasury and still more impossible for the forces of the Government to catch the outlaws as they ran away to their rendezvous in forests or other places difficult of access.

On the representation of Zakariya Khan in 1733, the Delhi government approved of the grant of a *Jagir* to the leader of the Sikhs with the title of

Nawab. The offer was made through one Sabeg Singh of Jambar who appeared before the Khalsa at Akal Takht, Amritsar. But no leader would accept it. The Khalsa was destined to rule free, they said, and could not occupy a subordinate position. The Guru had promised them *Raj*, and his word must be fulfilled. The *Jagir* was, therefore, tossed from man to man, without being accepted. At last, at the pressing entreaties of Sabeg Singh, it was suggested that it might be given to someone noted for service. Kapur Singh of Faizullapur was then waving a big fan over the assembly. He was selected for the honour. But he would not have it before it had been sanctified by the touch of five Khalsa's feet.

In giving them a *Jagir*, the Government had expected that the Sikhs would beat their swords into ploughshares and turn into peaceful peasants. But they were not made of such pliable stuff. They had tasted of political liberty and nothing short of it could satisfy them. They were pledged to free their land from foreign domination and they could not be sidetracked from their ultimate object. They availed themselves of this breathing time to organize the scattered Khalsa into strong and well-knit divisions, easy to maintain in days of scarcity and readily available in times of emergency. To begin with, two main divisions were recognised—the *Buddha Dal*, the Army of the Elders, and the *Taruna*

*Dal*, the Army of the Young. The *Buddha Dal* consisted of veterans, many of whom had seen the days of Guru Gobind Singh and had fought under the command of Banda Singh. They were led by Nawab Kapur Singh, with Sham Singh of Naroke, Gurbaksh Singh Roranwala, Bagh Singh Hallowalia and Bhamma Singh as prominent members. The *Taruna Dal* was led by Dip Singh and others. It was however discovered, especially after the death of Diwan Darbara Singh in July 1734, that the Army of Young needed further sub-division to provide for its leaders greater opportunities of service and fewer of friction. This was, therefore, split up into five *Jathas* under the leadership respectively of (i) Dip Singh, (ii) Karam Singh and Dharam Singh of Amritsar, (iii) Kahan Singh and Binod Singh of Goindwal, (iv) Dasaundha Singh of Kot Budha and (v) Biru Singh and Jiwan Singh *Ranghretas*.

While the Buddha Dal was comparatively more stationary, the Taruna Dal was always on the move, spreading into the Bari Doab and going further afield up to Hansi and Hissar. This renewed energy of the *Dal*, alarmed the government and led to the confiscation of the *Jagir* in 1735. Persecution of the Sikhs began again and thousands of them must have fallen under the executioner's sword. Among them was Bhai Mani Singh, a revered Sikh saint and scholar of the time, who had to pay with his life for his efforts to bring the Sikhs together at Amritsar. He



was hacked to pieces joint by joint at Lahore on November 15, 1737.

Sikh's entry into the temple and tank of Amritsar was banned and sentries were posted all round the city to watch out for them. But these oppressions failed to varquish the Sikhs. They shot out with vengeance whenever they found a chance. Some performed their pilgrimage in secret and in disguise; 'but in general, according to a contemporary Muhammedan author,' says Johan Malcolm, 'the Sikh horsemen were seen riding at full gallop towards their favourite shrine of devotion. They were often slain in making this attempt, and sometimes taken prisoners, but they used, on such occasions, to seek, instead of avoiding, the crown martyrdom, and the same authority states that an instance was never known of a Sikh in his way to Amritsar, consenting to abjure his faith,' (*Sketch of the Sikhs*, 88.)

The homeward return of Nadir Singh from Delhi through the Shivalaks, laden with the riches of the Mughal empire, offered a favourable chance to the Sikhs to replenish their resources. Driven away by Zakariya Khan from their homes and herths in the plains, they had taken shelter in these hills. The Sikhs fell upon Nadir's rear and relieved him of much of his booty. Astonished at this, Nadir Shah called a halt at Lahore and enquired about the whereabouts

of the people who had dared to rob the robber of Delhi. 'Who are these mischief-makers?' asked he. 'They are a group of fakirs who visit their Guru's tank (at Amritsar) twice a year, and bathing in it disappear', replied Zakariya. 'But where do they live?' was the next question of Nadir Shah. 'Their homes are their saddle,' was the reply. 'Take care, then,' Nadir warned him, 'the day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of the country.' This remark cut Zakariya Khan to the quick and he resolved to launch an all-out campaign against the Sikhs. The previous orders were now repeated with greater emphasis and rewards were offered for the capture and destruction of Sikhs.

The more daring and desperate people being out of the reach of Government, the wrath fell on peaceful, innocent Sikhs living in towns and villages. They were brought to Lahore in hundreds and were offered the choice of Islam or the sword. There were no exceptions made. Saints and scholars, peasants and tradesmen, women and children, all who wore long hair and followed the path of Sikhism, were condemned to the same fate. On refusing to give up his faith, the hair of Bhai Taroo Singh, a pious and devoted Sikh, were scraped off his head with a cobbler's scraper. Sabeg Singh of Jambar, who had persuaded the Khalsa to accept a *Jagir*, was also caught and broken on the wheel along with his young son, Shahbaz Singh. The situation for the Sikhs became worse during the

governorship of Yahiya Khan, the son and successor of Zakariya Khan, who had died on July 1, 1745. 'The Governor, Yahiya Khan,' says Syed Muhammad Latif in his *History of the Panjab*, 'now issued a proclamation for a general massacre of all Sikhs, wherever they could be found. Death was to be the punishment of all persons who invoked the name of Guru Gobind, and a reward was offered for the heads of Sikhs. Thousands were put to death daily and their heads brought before the Subedar of Lahore for reward.' It was during this time that all Sikhs living in Lahore were arrested and made over to sweepers for execution on March 10, 1746. A huge army under the personal command of Yahiya Khan and his diwan Lakhpat Rai marched against the Sikhs in May, and some ten thousand of them were estimated to have been killed in a few days. This holocaust is known in Sikh history as the first *Ghalughara*.

The internecine quarrels between Yahiya and his brother Shah Nawaz, followed by the invasion of Ahmad Shah Durrani of Afghanistan, gave the Sikhs a chance to emerge from their hide-outs. Their leader Jassa Singh Ahluwalia brushed aside the opposition of Adina Beg Khan, Faujdar of Jullundur, and took possession of Amritsar from Salabat Khan.

In their holy city, they celebrated the *Baisakhi* festival on March 29, 1748 and chose, at the suggestion

of Nawab Kapur Singh, Sardar Jassa Singh the leader of the Dal Khalsa, which was reorganized and declared to be a state. The feeling of the new leader was that they could no longer trust their safety to bushes and caves and that they must provide themselves with a regular fort. They selected a piece of land in the neighbourhood of their sacred temple and threw up a small enclosure of mud walls and called it Ram Raoni which was later named Ramgarh.

Sikhs now began to assert their rule in different parts of the central Panjab. They established themselves in the rural parts of Rachna, Bari and Jullundur *doabs*. The new governor, Miun-ul-Mulk popularly known as Mir Mannu (appointed on April 11, 1749), tried to placate them and secured, through Diwan Kaura Mall, their assistance against the afghan governor of Multan, Zahid Khan, whom the Durrani had left there after his first invasion of India. But when he was fully settled in his seat as governor, both of Lahore and Multan, after his submission to Ahmad Shah Durrani in march 1752, he changed his attitude towards the Sikhs. He ordered Adina Beg Khan to round them up in the Jullundur and Bari *doabs* and destroy them root and branch. At times Mir Mannu himself rode out for the hunt and brought in the large bag of Sikhs. Finding the homes of the Sikhs depleted of men, their women were seized and brought to Lahore. The dark and narrow dungeons where they were imprisoned, starved and tortured, and where their little



babes were cut to pieces and placed in their laps, can still be seen in the Gurdwara Shahidganj in the Landa Bazar Lahore. It was in the midst of one of his *Shikars* of Sikhs, that the hunter, Mir Mannu, was brought down by the mightier hunter, Death. On November 2, 1753, his horse shied at the sound of a return volley of the Sikhs and threw him off his seat. Before he fell to the ground, he got entangled in the stirrup and was dragged along the earth to fatal unconsciousness. He died on November 4.

The renewal of persecution by Mir Mannu had once again driven the Sikhs to their old ways and they had begun their bid for independence. The submission of Mannu to Ahmad Shah had converted Lahore and Multan into provinces of Afghanistan. The Sikhs had now to fight against two powers, the Mughals to the south of the Sutlej and the Afghans to the north of it. The death of Mir Mannu and the period of chaos and confusion that followed came to the Sikhs as godsend. They fully availed themselves of this situation not only in establishing themselves in various parts of the country and in expanding and strengthening their power, But also in resisting the re-establishment of Mughal authority or the strengthening of the Afghan rule in the Panjab. They foiled the attempts of Mughlani Begam, the widow of Mir Mannu, and of Khwaja Ubaidullah and Adina Beg Khan to maintain themselves at Lahore, and drove away the Afghans from the Land of the

### Five Rivers.

Ahmad Shah Durrani came to India for the fourth time in November-December 1756 and brought the great Mughal empire to its knees. On his way back he sacked the Sikh towns and temples of Kartarpur and Amritsar and left his son Prince Taimur as his viceroy at Lahore, evidently to re-establish the Afghan rule in the Panjab. But the Sikhs had by this time become virtual masters of central rural Punjab. Only Lahore and a few principalities in the neighbourhood of the towns were held by Muslims. Sardar Charhat Singh Sukkarchakkia (grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh), who had established himself at Gujranwala, was at times found to be very active in harassing Ahmad Shah on his homeward journey right up to the Indus.

Prince Taimur could not for long stay in the country. The combined forces of the Sikhs and Marathas (invited by Adina Beg) drove the Afghans away both from Sirhind and Lahore in March-April 1758. Adina Beg held Lahore for about four months, while the Maratha contingents continued to stay there up to November, 1759, when they fled away before the advancing Afghans during the fifth invasion of Ahmad Shah. The Sikhs, however, gave a better account of themselves and in a battle fought in the neighbourhood of Lahore inflicted a heavy loss on the Shah.

On his return to Afganistan, after the battle of Panipat, Ahmad Shah Durrani appointed Zain Khan as governor of Sirhind and recognized Sardar Ala Singh of Patiala (March 29, 1761) as the ruler of the territories held by him.

The years 1757 to 1761 were favourable to the Sikhs. While the Bhangi, Sukkarchakia and the Ahluwalia Sardars were able to expand and strengthen their power to the north of the Satluj. Sardar Ala Singh of the Phulkian family carved out a principality for himself in the south. The arrangements made by Ahmad Shah for the administration of the Panjab on his return to Afghanistan in May 1761 were all upset by the Sikhs as soon as he left Lahore. Khwaja Mirza Jan of the Chahar Mahal was defeated and killed and Nur-ud-Din Bamezai, an Afghan general, was worsted at Sialkot. In his attempt to reduce Gujranwala, Khwaja Ubaid Khan was routed and shut up in Lahore. The Sikh Sardar followed up this victory and triumphantly entered the city and, without yet completely establishing themselves in the capital, proclaimed Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia the king of Lahore, with the title of *Sultan - ul - Quam*. This fulfilled the wishes of their saintly leader, the late Nawab Kapur Singh, the organizer and first leader of the joint *Dal Khasa*,

The Sikhs now decided by a national resolution, known as *Gurmata*, passed in a general assembly of

the Khalsa at Amritsar on the occasion of Diwali on October 27, 1761, to liquidate the Indian allies and supporters of Ahmad Shah in the Panjab since they were a hindrance to the release of the country from the yoke of the Afghan invader. The nearest at hand was Adil Dass of Jandiala, twelve miles to the east of Amritsar. But they had to raise the seige (January 1762) on hearing that Ahmad Shah was rushing against them with a huge army. They crossed the rivers Beas and Satluj to arrange for the safety of their families in the hills of Anandpur and then return unencumbered to meet the Shah. This was a fatal mistake. As soon as the Shah heard from Bhikhan Khan of Malerkotla of the presence of the Sikhs in that area, he rushed down from Lahore and flung a surprise on them on the morning of February 5, 1762. Taken unawares, and attacked on all sides by the Afghans and the forces of Sirhind and Malerkotla the Sikh line of defence was broken and over ten thousand lives, mostly women, children and old men, were lost in the struggle. This fearful carnage is called the *Wada Ghalughara*, the second Great Holocaust, to distinguish it from the first *Ghalughara* of 1746.

On the 10th of April, a day before the Baisakhi festival, the Shah appeared at Amritsar and ordered the Sikh temple to be blown up with gun powder and the sacred tank to be desecrated with the blood and bones of men and cows and filled up with the debris

of the demolished edifices.

- All this, however, failed to depress the Sikhs. It only added to their determination and fury. Within three months, while the Shah was still at Lahore, they were once again up in arms against Zain Khan of Sirhind and inflicted a defeat upon him (April-May 1762).

On October 16, 1762, a day before Diwali, the Shah himself suffered a defeat at their hands in a pitched battle at Amritsar. At this time arrived news of disturbances in Afghanistan and he had to return home (December 12, 1762).

No sooner did the Durrani leave the Panjab than the Sikhs rushed out of the Lakhi Jungle and other places and resumed their struggle against the government. The Budha Dal led by Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia went about the country establishing Sikh thanas, while the Taruna Dal under younger leaders such as Sardar Charhat Singh Sukkarchakkia established itself at Amritsar and undertook to cleanse the holy tank and restore the ruined temple.

Having defeated and killed Bhikhan Khan of Malerkotla in an action in December 1763, the Sikhs turned to Sirhind to square up their accounts with Zain Khan. They were now at the fullest of their strength the two Dals having come together. United under the flag of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, they



made a determined attack on Sirhind on January 14, 1764, the third anniversary of the third battle of Panipat, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Afghans. Zain Khan was killed and his troops fled in all directions. With this victory, the entire province of Sirhind from the Sutlej in the north to the districts of Karnal and Rohtak in the south and from the boundary of Bahawalpur state in the west to the Jammuna in the east, came into the possession of the Sikhs.

In February, the Afghan governor of Lahore, Kabuli Mali, yielded to the pressure of the Sikhs and agreed to keep with him an agent of theirs, one Tek Chand by name, to advise him in the conduct of affairs and to receive ten rupees a day as his allowance. While Sardar Charhat Singh pushed on to the north-west beyond the Jhelum, Sardar Hari Singh Bhangi went up to Multan, crossed the Indus and overran the Deras,

Hearing of the Sikh eruptions in the Panjab and the failure of his generals and governors to resist them, Ahmad Shah Durrani, rushed down upon them in the winter of 1764—65 with a combined army of over thirty thousand Afghans and Baluchis. But he could not get at them. Successfully dodged and vexingly harassed by the Sikhs, he had to return home disappointed at the end of March 1765, leaving the Panjab to be parcelled out among the various Sikh confederacies.

On the Baisakhi day of Samvat 1822 Bk., April 10, 1765, the Sikhs decided by a *gurmata* at Amritsar to take possession of Lahore. All opposition was brushed aside in a week and they were the masters of Lahore on the morning of April 17. The Khalsa now stood supreme in the Panjab, They looked upon this achievement as a mark of the Guru's special favour and proclaimed it as such in all humility in the inscription on their coin, saying :

Deg O Tegh O Fateh O Nusrat be-dirang  
Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

The couplet was borrowed from the seal of Banda Singh and the coin of Jassa Singh.

The two Dals had by this time been divided into twelve important commands, popularly known as *Misals* or confederacies, They were:

To the north of the Sutlej

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| (i) Ahluwalia    | (ii) Bhangi          |
| (iii) Dallewalia | (iv) Faizullapuria   |
| (v) Kanhaiya     | (vi) Nakei           |
| (vii) Ramgarhia  | (viii) Sukkarchakkia |

To the south of Sutlej

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| (ix) Karorsingia | (x) Nishananwalia |
| (xi) Phulkian    | (xii) Shahid      |

The Sikh misals were republican in character. Each 'Missal,' in the words of Sir George Campbell, 'elected its own supreme cheif and sub-cheif, and

every horseman had his rights and shares in the common conquests. The combined Missals formed the *Khalsa* or Sikh common wealth. Just as in Germany the tendency was to an elective supreme chief who had very little power, and whose place was not hereditary. But the chiefs of Missals, and minor chiefs, gradually acquired a hereditary footing like the dukes and barons of Europe."

The trans Sutlej *Missals* were integrated into the sovereign state of the Panjab by Ranjit Singh. Born heir to one of these confederacies, he had the foresight to visualize a united Sikh kingdom. By his superior political understanding and military genius, he succeeded in reducing the existing states to subjection and joining the people of the Panjab into a strong nation.

Ranjit Singh, the only son of Sardar Mahan Singh Sukkarchakkia, was born of Bibi Raj Kaur, also known as Mai Malwain, on November 13, 1780. He was in his tenth year when his father died. Ranjit Singh showed uncommon ability and tact in administering the affairs of his small principality and won the confidence of his followers by his wise and courageous manner. He took part in the campaigns against Shah Zaman, the king of Kabul and a grandson of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who invaded India with a view to re-establishing the Durrani power. Once as the Shah was in occupation of the Lahore fort,

Ranjit Singh, according to two contemporary historians, Sohan Lal and Bute Shah, thrice rushed upon the Samman Burj of the fort with a handful of Sardars,<sup>1</sup> challenging him to an open combat. "Come on, O grandson of Ahmad Shah," shouted he "and meet the grandson of the Great Sardar Charhat Singh". But there was no response from the other side and Ranjit Singh had to retire without a trial of strength with the Durrani.

A real opportunity came Ranjit Singh's way when leading citizens of Lahore, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, tired of the Bhangi Sardars and dreading an attack from their neighbour Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur, sent him a petition to come and occupy the city. He marched with his army and took Lahore (July 7, 1799) without much resistance from its masters, the three Bhangi Sardars, who were treated with consideration and given *jagirs*. The occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh marked the beginning of a just and peaceful government after decades of unrest and chaos. Once in possession of the capital, he started enlarging the limits of his dominions. He conquered the powerful provinces of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar, eventually carrying battle to the home of the invaders who had incessantly come down upon India with the object of plunder and conquest. Ranjit Singh's name thus occupies a most honoured place in the national history of the country; for the stemmed for ever the tide of invasions from the

north-west and taught his countrymen how to fight for a patriotic cause.

Ranjit Singh not only founded a vast Kingdom, but also established a sound and enlightened system of administration. His government was completely secular in character and he recognized no distinctions of religion or creed when making appointments to offices of state. This is most remarkable considering that the Sikhs had just passed through a period of ruthless religious persecution. Ranjit Singh's chief minister was a Muslim, Faqir Aziz-ud-Din by name. So was his personal physician. Faqir Nur-ud-Din, Dina nath, a Hindu, was another minister to the Sikh court. The Sikh sovereign's most trusted officer in the palace was a Hindu, Jamadar Khushhal Singh, who held the office of *Deorhiwala* or chamberlain. The police administration of the capital was in the hands of a Muslim. A Muslim officer, General Ilah Bukhsh was incharge of the Artillery. Another, Imam-ud-Din, looked after the fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar, where Ranjit Singh kept most of the munitions of war. There were Dogras, Gorkhas and Muslims in his armies besides foreigners, including French, Italian, Americans and Russians. Throughout his career of war and conquest, Ranjit Singh was never known to have ravaged a city, desecrated a place of religious worship or shown harshness to vanquished enemy.

Ranjit Singh was a very shrewd ruler and perhaps



no one in India then understood the designs and diplomacy of the British better than he. His dealings with Charles Metcalfe, who kept following him for months with the draft of a treaty without being able to secure an interview, show to what advantage Ranjit Singh could have used his diplomatic skill and astuteness if his situation and circumstance had been more favourable.

But the British had distinct advantage over him. They were an older power, much more firmly established. They had practically the whole of India under their rule and were gradually closing in on the Panjab. The Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs had accepted their suzerainty and allowed them to extend their boundaries right up to Ranjit Singh's dominions and establish a cantonment at Ludhiana. The British were also cleverly laying their net in the Sikh state and, when the mighty Ranjit Singh was gone (June 27 1839), their machinations began to unfold themselves in a more sinister manner. Their friends, the Dogra brothers and the Sandhawalia Sardar set in motion a series of the courtly conspiracies which resulted in the destruction of the Sikh dynasty. Ranjit Singh's successors, one after the other, fell victims to foul intrigue. His son, Kharak Singh was poisoned to death by Dhian Singh. His grandson, prince Nau-Nihal Singh, became the target of fatal plot as he was returning after his father's cremation. Maharaja Kharak Singh's widow, Maharani Chand Kaur, had her

head beaten to pulp by her maid-servants who were secretly in the pay of the Dogras. Ranjit Singh's second son Maharaja Sher Singh was assassinated by Ajit Singh Sandhawalia, who, pretending to show to his sovereign the carbine he had got from an English man while on a visit to Calcutta, emptied the barrel into the Maharaja's chest, killing him on the spot. A little distance away, Sher Singh's young son, prince Partap Singh, barely 13 years old, was simultaneously put to the sword by Attar Singh Sandhawalla. Many more princes, ministers and Sardars were engulfed in this bloody carnage. Ranjit Singh's kingdom lay in ruin and chaos when the British launched their first war upon it.

The British had made sure of victory before they fired their first shot. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, their dream of conquering the Panjab had acquired clearer and more definite lineaments and they had set in train an elaborate political and diplomatic conspiracy for its realization. Memoranda and plans were drawn up; armies were assembled on the Sikh frontier; guns, stores and other munitions were collected; officers of the Lahore Darbar were seduced and won over and spies and traitors were set to work to create conditions favourable for a successful occupation of the country. And all this when they were committed by treaties and agreements to be friendly towards the Lahore government. The Sikhs, on the other hand, remained true to their

pighted word and scrupulously observed to the last the terms of alliances made with the British. They were openly provoked by the British Frontier officers such as Major George Broadfoot. The latter behaved as if the Lahore territories to the South of the Sutlej belonged to the British and attacked a party of Sikh Sardars visiting their dominions on official duty.

The climax came when the Governor-General Sir Henry Hardinge ordered the troops from Ambala, Meerut and some other stations in the rear to move up to their frontier. The Sikhs decided to move their troops only when they learned that the governor-General and the Commander-in-chief were marching up to their border. They crossed the Sutlej (December 12, 1845) a whole week after the actual movement of British troops had started. Even this involved no violation of the British frontier, since the Sikhs had landed in their own territories. But the Governor-General proclaimed war on the Sikhs (December 13) and confiscated Maharaja Duleep Singh's possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej.

Five battles took place—Mudki (December 18), Ferozshahr (December 21), Baddowal (January 21, 1846), Aliwal (January 28) and Sobraon (February 10). The Sikhs fought with their usual spirit of courage, chivalry and patriotism and came very close to victory at some decisive moments. But the last minute desertions and treacheries of the Poorbias and Dogras saved the British many a desperate situation and

eventually enabled them to claim success after the battle of Sobraon. The British troops marched upon the Sikh capital, arriving there on February 20. Two days later a portion of the royal citadel was garrisoned by English regiments. A treaty was signed at Lahore on March 9, followed by another on March 11, which secured the British a few more territorial concessions. The British troops were to remain in Lahore till the close of the year. But a fresh treaty (Bharowal, December 16, 1846) was foisted on the Darbar, extending the British lease up to September 4, 1854—the day Maharaja Duleep Singh was to attain the age of 16. The resident at Lahore now ruled on behalf of the minor King with "full authority to direct and control all matters in every Department of the State."

The Panjab, of course was never intended to be an independent country again, and, although according to treaties the British were to stay in Lahore, only during the minority, they were gradually strengthening their control and spreading their net with a view to completely subjugating the control. A rising in Multan was at last made the excuse for usurpation. As regents of the young Sikh ruler, it was the duty of the British to quell any disorder. But they let the Multan disturbances grow, deliberately postponing action. The act of restoring order in a few districts of the state, was given the name of war. In the two battles (Chelianwala, January 13, 1849, and Gujrat,

February 21, 1849), the Lahore troops and members of the Sikh Council of Regency, with the solitary exception of Sardar Sher Singh, co-operated with the British, who fought as guardians of the Sikh Maharaja. But when they were victorious, they deposed and repudiated their ward and annexed his kingdom. A British writer's comments on this transaction are significant:

"This is perhaps the first instance on record in which a guardian has visited his own misdeeds upon his ward. The British Government was the self-constituted guardian of the Rajah, and the regent of his kingdom; a rebellion was provoked by the agents of the guardian, it was acknowledged by the guardian to be a rebellion against the government of his ward, and the guardian punished that ward by confiscating his dominions and his diamonds to his own use." John Sullivan in *Are We Bound by our Treaties?*

Soon after the annexation of the Panjab the young Maharaja Duleep Singh was placed under guardianship of Dr. John Login and removed to Fatehgarh in the U. P. Here, under Christian influences, he was converted to Christianity and presented by Lord Dalhousie with the 'Divine book of the Lord' in place of the temporal kingdom of the Panjab of which he had been deprived. In 1854 he sailed for England, never to see the land of his birth again. He came to India twice for short periods. In January 1861, he



came to Calcutta to see his ailing mother and, as she refused to be parted from him, he took her along to England. For the second time he came in 1864 to return her ashes to the soil of India in compliance with her last wish that her bones should not be allowed to rot in the heartless land of the English; *'Merian haddian is nirdei dharti vich na rul jan.'*

A careful study of original documents and relevant literature during his stay in England had convinced the Maharaja that he had been cheated out of his kingdom and defrauded of his property by the British administrators of India. He began to agitate for the restoration of his sovereign rights over the Panjab and for the return of the diamond Koh-i-noor. He appealed to Her-Majesty Queen Victoria and England's Prime Minister, the Marquis of Salisbury, for justice and requested for the appointment of a competent Court of Law Lords of the House of peers to pronounce a judgment upon the conduct of the East India Company's administration towards him. This was refused. Frustrated and disgusted, he decided to return to India to live and die in the land of his ancestors. But he was not allowed to touch the shores of his motherland. He was disembarked at Aden and ordered back to Europe. During his short stay at Aden he renounced Christianity and rejoined the faith of his forefathers, receiving the Sikh baptism at the regimental Gurdwara there. On his return to Europe, he made frantic efforts to seek the assistance of the Russians, but he was not successful. He died of

a broken heart at Paris on October 22, 1893. He had a large family of ten of whom only his eldest daughter princess Bamba Sutherland survives.\*

Having deprived the Sikhs of political power in 1849, the British tried to break their morale. The leading Sardars were either exiled or imprisoned. Their lands and properties were confiscated and their forts and mansions were razed to the ground. The Sikh leaders were reduced to nonentities to be humiliated and ridiculed by those who, while in their service, had betrayed the cause of the Panjab and had now been raised to positions of authority by the new rulers of the land.

Then came the mutiny of 1857. The Sikhs had not been taken into confidence. They had neither been consulted nor invited. The poorbias had not the moral courage to approach them for assistance since they had themselves helped the British destroy the Independent kingdom of the Panjab in 1845-46 and reduce it to British subjection in 1848-49. Moreover, the offensive airs of the poorbia garrison in the Panjab were particularly galling to the martial Sikhs. The behaviour of the poorbia soldiers during their first march from the theatre of war to the capital of Lahore and during the British occupations of the country before and after the annexation had caused such deep wounds in the hearts of the people

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\*Died issueless on 10 March 1957.

as could not be healed in so short a period. The Sikhs could not volunteer to help these erstwhile enemies of their country, nor could they, for evident reasons, espouse the cause of the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, whom the mutineers had raised to the throne. For over two centuries they had fought against the Mughal tyranny and they could not now be persuaded to support an alliance which might have resulted in its re-establishment.

The Sikhs however were not considered to be above suspicion by the British even after the suppression of the mutiny. The activities of the Sikh reformist movements of the Nirankaris and the Namdharis were closely watched. They had both taken birth in the north-west - the Nirankaris at Rawalpindi and the Namdharis at Hazro (attock)- and they both aimed at maintaining the purity and glory of Sikhism. After the death of their first leader, Bhai Balak Singh of Hazro, the Namdharis, originally known as *Jagiasis* and *Abhiasis* (seekers and meditators), and later called the Kockas, assumed greater importance under Baba Ram Singh of Bhaini and spread in the central and cis-Sutlej districts and states. In the eighteen-sixties they attracted the attention of the British authorities and were suspected of disloyal activities aiming at the re-establishment of the Sikh rule. Baba Ram Singh was a peace-loving saint. Much against his wishes, some of his over-zealous followers committed murders of cow-killing

butchers, and in January 1872 a batch of them marched upon Malaud Malerkotla for arms. Their attempts failed and the whole batch of them was arrested. Mr. L Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, who, perhaps, wished to be known as defender of the British empire in India; interpreted this venture as the beginning of another rebellion in India and, without any trial, ordered forty-nine of the Kookas to be blown away from the guns on January 17, 1872. Similarly the Commissioner of Ambala, Mr. Douglas Forsyth, blew away the remaining sixteen of them the next day. This calculated cold-blooded murder sent a thrill of horror through the country and both of them were removed from service by the Government of India. Baba Ram Singh with twelve of his lieutenants was exiled from the Panjab and he died at Rangoon on November 29; 1884. The headquarters of the Namdharis at Bhaini were placed under police surveillance which lasted until December 10, 1920, when the Government, finding them opposed to the Akali agitation against the Panjab authorities, withdrew the restrictions.

The awakening created by the Nirankaris and Namdharis gave birth to the Singh Sabha movement which, under the guidance of the Khalsa Diwan, Lahore, and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, has to its credit the spread of education among the Sikhs including the establishment of the Khalsa College at Amritsar. The efforts of these institutions

supported by the writings of Giani Ghan Singh, Bhai Ditt Singh and Bhai Vir Singh, brought about a renaissance in the community and introduced a number of religious and social reforms.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth the Sikhs and Sikhism had to face the most fanatical attacks of the Arya Samajists who not only abused and insulted their Gurus but also ridiculed the community by publicly shaving a number of Sikhs at Lahore and other places. It was all the more painful to the Sikhs as it was they who had first invited the founder of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayananda, to the Panjab, had arranged for his lectures at Jullundur, Amritsar etc and had protected him against the Sanatan Dharmi Hindus on whom he poured abuse in his writings and speeches. The present day opposition of the Panjab Arya Samajists to the language and culture of the Panjab is only a projection of their old inimical fanaticism against the Sikhs.

The spring and summer of 1907 saw the beginnings of a new political awakening and agitation among the Sikhs. It was in connection with the Colony Bill of 1907 which had been passed in the Panjab Legislature against the advice of most of the Indian members. Some of its provisions were unduly oppressive to the agriculturist Colonists of the Lyallpur district who were mainly Sikhs. The astirring poems of Banke Dayal (like the



*Pagri Sambhal O Jatta Pagri Sambhal O*) and the fire breathing speeches of Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai, who took up the cause of the colonists, worked up the Sikh agriculturists against the Government. Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai were deported. The agitation, was however, successful in persuading the Viceroy, Lord Minto, to withhold his sanction to the Bill.

Ajit Singh disappeared to Persia and then to the United States of America. There he got in touch with the Hindustan Ghadar Party of San Francisco. This party had been organized on June 2, 1913, under the presidentship of Baba Sohan Singh of Bhakna (Amritsar) with the object of freeing India from under the British yoke and establishing a *Panchayat Raj* (Republican state). Its official organ, the *Ghadar*, began publication as a weekly on November 1, 1913.

Indian emigrants to Canada were in those days subjected to many humiliating restrictions. To comply with the requirements of the Canadian government Baba Gurdit Singh chartered a Japanese ship, *Koma-gata-Maru* (renamed as *Guru Nanak Jahaz*) and set sail with three hundred and seventy-six passengers. But they were not allowed to land at Vancouver. On their return to India they were received at Baj Baj on September 26, 1914, by the police who would not allow them to go to Calcutta and insisted on their leaving for the Panjab by a special train kept ready

for them. In the tumult a shot was fired. In the firing that followed, between forty and fifty Sikhs were killed. Baba Gurdit Singh escaped with some of his companions. The others were rounded up, brought to the Panjab and lodged in different jails. Similarly, 173 passengers, mostly Sikhs from America, Japan, Manila and Shanghai, arriving at Calcutta by *Tasu Maru* on October 28, 1914, were interned in the Central jails of Montgomery and Multan. This gave a powerful stimulus to the Ghadar propaganda in the country.

At this time a large number of Ghadarites slipped in through the ports unobserved and poured into the Panjab, Bhai Kartar Singh Sarabha was a prominent figure among the revolutionaries who were to lead an armed rebellion with the help of sympathetic army units stationed in different cantonments. Rash Bihari Bose was to direct the operations. 21st of February, 1915, was the date fixed for the rising. It was changed to February 19. But the secret leaked out and the timely precautions taken by the Government proved an effective check. The leaders and active workers were all arrested and tried under three different cases in 1915-16. Seventeen of them were hanged and a large number of them was sent to jail for life. In addition to these some two dozen other Sikhs were sentenced to death for offences connected with the Ghadar movement by civil and military courts.

The year 1914 also saw the beginning of the Rikab Ganj Gurdwara agitation which further widened the gulf between the Sikhs and the Government. This Gurdwara is sacred to the memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur and stands on the site where his headless body was cremated after his execution in 1675. Early in 1914 the Government of India pulled down a part of its inclosing wall to suit the plan of the new Viceregal Lodge for which they had acquired from the Mahant the whole land lying between the Gurdwara and the outer wall. There was a great agitation among the Sikhs, but it was suspended during the war of 1914-18. It was, however, again taken up after the war by Sardar Harchand Singh and Master Sundar Singh of Lyallpur and Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar of Lahore. As the Government refused to respect the sentiments of the Sikhs, it was decided to send a *Shahidi Jatha* (a batch of martyrs) to rebuild the demolished wall and face the consequences of official wrath. The Government then realized the seriousness of the situation. Before the *Jatha* arrived at Delhi, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha arranged for the reconstruction of the wall on behalf of the Government of India.

The indiscriminate massacre of people by General Dyer in the Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar on April 12, 1919, set ablaze the smouldering fire of political discontent against the British Government in India. It hardened the people of the Panjab-and particularly

the Sikhs—to open defiance of law for the restoration of people's rights, to begin with, in the management of their religious institutions. The custodians of Sikh temples had fallen into evil ways and the Government invariably stood for the maintenance of vested interests. The process of law was dilatory and expenses prohibitive. The Sikhs had tried the experiment of litigation and had begun to despair. They had failed to release their temple at Sialkot from the clutches of an apostate who openly flouted Sikh religion. They found themselves helpless against the Mahant of Nankana Sahib. The Government would not withdraw its own control from the temples of Amritsar and Tarn Taran. The Government of the Panjab opposed in 1920 the introduction of a bill in the Imperial Legislature to secure to the people a little more effective control of religious and charitable endowments.

Finding the existing law of no avail and the Government indifferent, the Sikhs adopted the new technique of sending *jathas* of peaceful Akali volunteers to assert their 'inherent right of managing their temples or Gurdwaras. The success gained at Rikab Ganj, Delhi, and at Sialkot on October 5, 1920, encouraged the Sikhs to apply this technique to the Gurdwaras at Amritsar, Panja Sahib (Husan abdal) and many other places. Alarmed at the successes of the Sikh reformists, some of the officials began to connect their movement with the political agitation in the

country. Mr. King, the Commissioner of Lahore Division, in an official letter encouraged the priests to put up resistance against the reformists, with the result that clashes began to occur between the priests and the reformers. At Tarn Taran volunteers were attacked and two of them were killed. The bloodiest event occurred on February 20, 1921, at Nankana Sahib, the birth place of Guru Nanak, where Mahant Narain Das butchered about 130 unarmed and non-violent volunteers in cold blood with axes and guns. The dead and dying were gathered up into piles and were burnt with kerosene oil. The whole world was shocked to hear the news. The Government were now left with the only alternative of handing over the control of the Gurdwara to an elected representative committee of the Sikhs known as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

But the attitude of the Government became hostile and they adopted coercive measures to suppress the movement. Instructions were issued to District magistrates to attack a Gurdwara whenever there appeared an apprehension of interference on the part of the Akalis. In November 1921 the keys of the golden Temple, Amritsar, were snatched away from its manager and all those who protested were taken into custody. Hundreds went to jail at the bidding of the S. G. P. C. and remained perfectly non-violent. Failing to find any one to become a manager on behalf of the Government or to set up a rival committee, the Government

was obliged to return the keys to the S. G. P. C, and release the prisoners unconditionally on January 17, 1922. This triumphed non-violence and self-sacrifice over tyranny and power madness, and Mahatma Gandhi congratulated the Sikhs in a telegram to the president of the S. G. P. C., saying : First Decisive Battle of India's Freedom won. congratulations.

There was yet another trial of strength to come at Guru ka Bagh about twelve miles from Amritsar. The Mahant having gone back upon his pledges, the Shiro-mani Committee took charge of the institution in its own hands. The Government stepped in on behalf of the Mahant and arrested and convicted on August 8, 1922; the akali volunteers for cutting firewood from a grove of trees. The Sikhs took this as a challenge and began to pour in to court arrest. The Government arrested the leaders of the S. G. P. C, closed all approaches to the Guru ka Bagh and belaboured with lathis all those who proceeded to the place, leaving them unconscious on the ground. A party of 100 Sikhs daily took solemn vow at the holy Akal Takhat of Amritsar to go for sacrifice and under all circumstances to remain non-violent in word and deed. On their refusal to disperse at Guru ka Bagh, they were mercilessly beaten by the police and thrown in muddy ditches, to be picked up by medical relief parties. The reports of eye-witnesses and the letters of the Rev. C.F. Andrews sent to the press from the place of occurrence stirred the conscience of the world and convinced the



people that there was something far greater involved in this struggle than a mere dispute about land and property. In the words of the Rev. C. F. Andrews, 'A new heroism, learnt through suffering, has arisen in the land. A new lesson in moral warfare has been taught to the world.'

With some two thousand Sikhs beaten to unconsciousness and 5605 arrested up to November 16, 1922, the Government failed to overawe them. It was in a fix and was in search of a way out. At this stage, Sir Ganga Ram a retired engineer came to the rescue of the Government. He took the land in dispute on lease from the Mahant and wrote to the Government that he did not require the protection of the police. Thus did the Government wriggle out of an untenable position.

The next struggle was only partially religious. It began on September 14, 1923, when the continuous reading (*Akhand path*) of Guru Granth Sahib going on at Jaito in Nabha state, for the benefit of the desposed Maharaja Ripudaman Singh, was interrupted by the State authorities. The State was then ruled by a British administrator, Mr. Johnston Wilson. The *jathas* sent by the S. G. P. C., for restarting the interrupted reading were arrested by the state police and left in farflung and out-of-the-way places. After some 500 men had been treated in this way, a big *Shahidi jatha* of 500 was sent. On its arrival at Jaito on February 21, 1924, it was mercilessly fired upon by

the State forces, causing some 300 casualties including about 100 killed. The members of the Jatha seeing their comrades fall dead or wounded, rushed forward to seek martyrdom and, in the words of an eye-witness, they literally ran into the jaws of death. Many more *Jathas* followed. They were all arrested and not fired upon. The struggle dragged on up to July, 21, 1925, when the restrictions on the *Akhand path* were removed and the Sikhs were allowed to perform the ceremony uninterrupted.

Negotiations had in the meantime been going on with the Government of the Punjab for a permanent solution of the Gurdwara problem. With the strenuous efforts of Bhai Jodh Singh, M. A., and his colleagues in the Punjab Legislative Council, the Gurdawara Act 1925 was passed on July 7, and came into operation on November 1925. It placed the control of all Historical Gurdawaras in the hands of an elected Board which was named the Shiromani Gurdawara prabandhak Committee. This brought to an end the long drawn struggle between the Sikhs and the Government on this issue.

Thirty thousand Sikhs are estimated to have gone to jail during the Gurdwara movement, paying some fifteen lakhs of rupees as fines, with the loss of about five hundred lives.

In the field of politics, the Sikhs have always been in the van of patriots. The activities of Bhai Maharaj Singh after the annexation, of Maharani Jind Kaur

during her exile, of Baba Ram Singh Kooka and of Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhawalia, as well as those of Maharaja Duleep Singh in Europe, are all links in the chain of Sikhs struggle for freedom from British domination. The unrest created in the Punjab colony areas by Sikh agriculturists and the attempt of the Ghadar party to raise an armed rebellion in the country point to the same direction. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 added fresh fuel to the smouldering fire of political agitation against the British domination and the Sikhs jumped into the arena with the first session of the Central Sikh League held at Amritsar in 1919 along with the session of Indian National Congress. In the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in September 1920 was passed Mahatma Gandhi's resolution of non-violent non-cooperation with British. The sponsors of the Central Sikh League were greatly impressed by Gandhi ji's move and they invited him to their second session at Lahore on October, 20, 1920, under the Presidentship of Sardar Kharak Singh. The sincere and enthusiastic appeal of the venerable Sardar carried the day and the Non-violent Non-cooperation resolution was adopted with the traditional vigour of the khalsa. In the words of Lala Lajpat Rai, 'as regards non-violence, with its attendant conception of self-sacrifice, they have given the most amazing proofs at Nankana Sahib and later at Ajnala and Amritsar. They have proved themselves worthy

descendants of their Gurus, and the example they have set of self-sacrifice, calm courage, devoid of swagger in the face of provocation will be hard to beat."

When Lala Lajpat Rai, the then president of the Punjab Provincial Congress; was imprisoned in February 1922, Baba Kharak Singh became its president. As a result of the Government policy of repression against the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi was sent to jail for six years and Baba Kharak Singh was sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment for delivering sedition speeches. In December 1922 he discarded his clothes as a protest against the order of the Government not to allow the prisoners in jail to wear black turbans or Gandhi caps. The Government tried to divide the Hindus and Sikhs and withdrew the ban on black turbans. But Baba Kharak Singh remained unshaken and wore clothes only in June 1927, after four and a half years, when he was released from the jail. He was one of the top most leaders in the Punjab who led demonstrations against the Simon Commission in 1928 and refused to agree to accept Dominion Status for India. He stood for complete independence, for which a resolution was passed in the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress on December 31, 1929, under the presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

In February 1930 Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch the Civil Disobedience, campaign for which the Shiromani Akali Dal offered, on March 5, five thousand

Akali volunteers. The campaign could not, however, be pushed forward on account of Hindu-Muslim riots at Calcutta and Poona.

In 1932 the Sikhs under the leadership of Master Tara Singh refused to accept the Communal Award of the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Mac Donald. But as they were in a negligible minority in the country their protest remained unheeded like a cry in the wilderness.

During this period Sir Sunder Singh Majithia tried to solve the political problems of the Sikhs in co-operation with the Government. A section of the Sikhs, like that of the Congress was persuaded, for political reasons, to help the British government during the Second world war while a considerable number of them joined the Quit-India campaign of 1942 and went to jail.

The part played by the Sikhs in the organization and maintenance of the Indian National Army [The Azad Hind Fauj] at first under the command of Genral Mohan Singh and then of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, 1942—45 deserves a special mention. Thousands of them in the Far East sacrificed that all in its cause and thousands laid down their lives at its call. And all honour to the I. N. A. for its contribution to the achievement of Indian independence.

The Sikhs were the staunchest advocates of Akhand Hindustan, the undivided India. In the course of negotiations of the division of India in 1946—47 the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh refused



the offer of Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah for a separate State in Pakistan, and decided to sink or swim with India. If Master Tara Singh had not protested against the inclusion of the Punjab in Pakistan and had not raised his sword-arm in its defence, the Land of the Five Rivers would, perhaps have been completely lost to India.

True to the spirit of his great ancestors of the eighteenth century, Maharaja Yadavindra Singh offered his entire resources for the service of those who were driven out of West Panjab. And this offer came as a God-send to the bewildered refugees. The timely organization set up by the Maharaja for the relief and rehabilitation of the uprooted Panjabis was a great source of hope and encouragement to them and gave time and inspiration to the Government of the Panjab and the central Government of India to set up machinery for their settlement in India.

The service rendered to India by the Patiala troops in Kashmir in October-November 1947 shall remain writ large on the pages of history. The tribal Pathans from the north-west aided by regular Pakistan-troops had attacked the valley. The procrastination of the Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh 'had laid, his subjects open to arson, bloodshed, loot and rape' by the Pakistanis. Soon after he signed on October 26, 1947, the Instrument of Accession to India, the 1st Sikh Regiment was flown to its defence. These brave sons of the Panjab were able to check the advance of



the Pakistanis. Then more Indian troops arrived, and in due course the valley of Kashmir was saved for India.

Under a strange complex a section of the Urdu press has, since the partition of the country, been carrying on a campaign of vilification against the Sikhs. At times they ascribe to the Sikh things which they have never subscribed to, and, perhaps never thought of. In their sectarian fanaticism they have gone to the extent of disowning and decrying their mother-tongue, the Panjabi, in spite of its being their common medium of expression in their everyday lives—a thing which no other people on the surface of the earth have ever done in the past history of mankind. They appear to have succeeded to a certain extent in poisoning the minds of the great Hindu community in whose name they pose to parade and whose cause they pretend to uphold. This has given rise, not without reason, to distrust in the minds of the Sikhs who have come to feel that their language and culture are not safe under the political and cultural domination of such people. Hence the demand for a *Panjabi suba* which is now the subject of negotiations between the Sikh leaders and the Government of India. God willing, the problem of the Punjab will be soon solved to the satisfaction to all, and there shall be peace and prosperity in the Land. Amin.

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